

ACTIVITIES IN MARAŞ AND ITS SURROUNDINGS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES ESTABLISHED BY ARMENIANS*

(ERMENİLERİN KURDUKLARI CEMİYETLER VE
KOMİTELERİN MARAŞ VE ÇEVRESİNDEKİ FAALİYETLERİ)

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Abstract: *In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire enacted several changes in its legal and political system due to its desire to overcome its internal problems and due to the expansion of its relations with the West. The first change was the declaration of the “Edict of Reorganization” (“Tanzimat Fermanı”). Following this edict, which regulated the relationship between the state and the public, the “Edict of Reform” (“Islahat Fermanı”) and the “Constitutional Era” (“Meşrutiyet”) were proclaimed. Armenians, who lived under the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia, took the case of the Balkan peoples as an example to be emulated, whom had gained their independence by revolting against the empire. Under the effect of this example, Armenians tried to get support from the foreign states in order to first gain autonomy, and then to establish an independent Armenian state. In the meantime, they organized several internal insurrections. For these insurrections to work, Armenians needed to make psychological and organizational preparation and acquire weapons. In this study, the way in which Armenians organized themselves for independence and the activities of the organizations they founded will be investigated. This study also aims to reveal the activities that Armenians had engaged in Maraş and its surroundings during and after the World War I. In this study, the documents of the Ottoman archives will be used as the main sources.*

Key Words: *Armenian, Terrorism, Maraş (Marash), Zeyton (Zeitun), Kilis*

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Öz: *Osmanlı Devleti, XIX. yüzyılda kendi iç problemlerini çözmek istemesi ve Batı ile ilişkilerinin artması sonucunda bazı düzenlemeler yaptı. Bu düzenlemelerden ilki “Tanzimat Fermanı”nın ilan edilmesiydi. Devletin halkla ilişkilerini düzenleyen bu fermanın ardından Islahat Fermanı ve Meşrutiyet’in ilan edilmesi geldi. Osmanlı Devleti’nin Anadolu’daki unsurlarından biri olan Ermeniler; Balkanlarda yaşayan halkların çeşitli isyanlar çıkararak bağımsızlıklarını elde etmelerini örnek aldılar. Bunun da etkisiyle önce özerk, sonra da bağımsız bir Ermeni devleti kurma amacıyla çalışmalar yaparak yabancı devletlerden destek almaya çalıştılar. Bir taraftan da içeride isyanlar organize ettiler. İsyanların çıkarılması için psikolojik hazırlık, örgütlenme ve silahlanma gerekiyordu. Bu çalışmada, Ermenilerin bağımsızlık için çeşitli şekillerde örgütlenmeleri ve bu örgütlerin faaliyetleri ele alınacaktır. Çalışmada ayrıca Ermenilerin Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında ve sonrasında Maraş ve çevresinde yaptıkları faaliyetlerin ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmada Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri ana kaynak olarak kullanılacaktır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ermeni, Terör, Maraş, Zeytun, Kilis.*

INTRODUCTION

Charity Foundations and Unions Established by Armenians in Ottoman Territories

Following the proclamations of the Edicts of Reorganization and Reform (*Tanzimat ve Islahat Fermanları*), various charity unions were established throughout the Ottoman Empire. The purpose of these Armenian unions was to ensure the cultural, physical, and social development and cooperation of the Armenian community by opening schools, dormitories, orphanages, hospitals, and sports facilities.¹ Armenians' first union was "Ser" ("Love"), established by Mıgırdıç Kırımian, who had been sent from İstanbul to Kilikya (Cilicia). The purpose of this union was the establishment of an independent Armenian state in Kilikya. Once this purpose received support from Patrik Varyebatyan as well, the union opened branch offices in Zeytun (Zeitun), Haçin, and Göksun, and in time, it started to work for not only the independence of Armenians in Zeytun and Kilikya, but also for the independence of all Ottoman Armenians.²

The other union was the "Hayırseverler Cemiyeti" ("Benevolent Union"), which began its activities in 1860 in İstanbul. Headed by Mikail Nalbandian, who had come from Russia, the purpose of this union was to economically and socially uplift Kilikya Armenians and to finance Armenian schools that had opened in Kilikya. Even though the union did not directly take part in revolt organizations, it is known that two of its members, Hasip Şişmanyan and Mıgırdıç Beşiktaşyan, had a role in the revolt that took place Zeytun in 1862.³

Between 1870 and 1880, the unions of "Ararat" in Van, "Okul Sevenler" ("School Lovers"), "Şarklı" ("Easterner") and "Ermenistan'a Doğru" ("Towards Armenia") in Muş (Mush), and "Kilikya" in Adana were established. Seemingly devoid of revolutionary intentions, these unions merged together in 1880 and took the name "Miyasiyal Enikorotyon Hoyotis" ("United Armenian Union").⁴

1 Azmi Süslü, Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, Refet Yinanç, ve Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler* (Ankara, 2001), p. 167.

2 Louis Ziazan Nalbandian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Movement of the Nineteenth Century: The Origins and Development of Armenian Political Parties", PhD thesis (Michigan: Stanford University, 1958), pp.119-120.

3 Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1985), p. 128; Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary...*, p. 114.

4 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, Genişletilmiş 2. Baskı (İstanbul: Belge Yay., 1987), p. 421.

In addition to these unions, there were unions established with overtly revolutionary intentions: the unions of “İttihad ve Halas” (“Union and Liberation”) and “Kara Haç” (“Black Cross”) were established in 1872 and 1878 respectively in Van with Russia’s support. Established in Erzurum in 1881, the union called “Şurây-ı Âli” (“Council of Ali”) later on changed its name to “Müdafî Vatandaşlar” (“Defence Citizens”). Again in Erzurum, unions of “Anavatan Müdafileri” (“Homeland Defenders”), “Silahlılar” (“Those Who Have Weapons”), and “Milliyetperver Kadınlar” (“Nationalist Women”) were established in 1882. Among these, the “Anavatan Müdafileri” -although expressing that it was established to protect Armenians from attacks- was closed down in 1882 after some of its members were arrested, once it was realized that it was engaging in destructive activities and arming Armenians.⁵ Armenians, apart from the unions they established in eastern cities, were also organizing themselves in the inner parts of Anatolia by establishing organizations with revolutionary intentions. The stamps, which belonged to the “Kilikya Vatanseverler Topluluğu” (“Cilicia Patriots Society”) and which were seized and sent to the central government by the Maraş (Marash) Commissariat (*Komiserliği*), are a good example of this.⁶ As soon as it was established, the Kilikya Vatanseverler Topluluğu opened the “Getronegan Yüksek Ermeni Okulu” (“Getronegan Armenian College”). Again, in the year 1880, an association named “Kilikya Hamisi” (“Guardian of Cilicia”) was established by Simbat Pürat in Maraş.⁷

“Yıldırım” (“Lightning”) and “Kurban” (“Sacrifice”) unions were established in 1890 in İstanbul. The Kurban union was established by Dr. Pakrat Naavasartyan, who was a Caucasian Armenian. This union was being managed from Tbilisi.⁸ Established in Maraş in the year 1901, the “Ermeni Öğretmenler Eğitim Kulübü” (“Armenian Teachers Education Club”) started to hold conferences on cultural and social issues.⁹

ARMENIAN COMMITTEES

New York Yurtsever Ermeniler Komitesi (New York Patriotic Armenians Committee)

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5 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p. 129.

6 Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, 1-38, 3. Cilt, Belge Numarası 43, p. 186.

7 Pars Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, II. Cilt (İstanbul: Pars Yay., 2004), p. 563.

8 Süslü ve diğerleri, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, p. 169.

9 Pars Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, III. Cilt (İstanbul: Pars Yay., 2004), p. 239.

Committee”) was established in 4 April 1891 to attain Armenian objectives by ensuring the organization of Armenians, managing of Armenians, and the establishing of the European Central Committee. In a letter dated 20 April 1891, the Patriotic Committee in İstanbul announced that it supported the establishment of a central committee. Following the committee’s program being voted on and ratified, it was sent to its centers in various European cities.¹⁰

Armenekan Komitesi (Armenekan Committee)

Constituting a first, the Armenian committee called “Armenekan” was established in 1885 in Van.¹¹ The objective of establishing the Armenekan Committee was to give Armenians a political organization with which they could govern themselves through the way of a revolution. In order to achieve this, it was necessary was to gather all Armenians under the roof of this organization and to teach them how to use guns with military discipline, to acquire guns and money, to form guerrilla forces, and to gear up the people for a mass movement.¹²

Hınçak Komitesi (Hunchak Committee)

“Hınçak” (“Hunchak”) means bell, ting, or rattle in the Armenian language. The committee was established in 1887 by seven Armenians of Russia who were the children of wealthy families and who were educated in Europe.¹³ Social democrat in character, the committee was established with the aim of prioritizing Karl Marx’s principles. Its political program was Socialist-Marxist and centralist.¹⁴

The political purpose of this committee was establishing an independent

10 BOA, HR. SYS. 60/46 (26 May 1891).

11 Nejat Göyünç, *Türkler ve Ermeniler*, yay. Haz. Kemal Çiçek (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yay., 2005), p. 98.

12 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p. 129.

13 Süslü ve diğerleri, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, p.171; Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p. 130.

14 Erdal İlater, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist Ermenilerin Silahlanma Faaliyetleri ve Milli Mücadele’de Ermeniler (1890-1923)* (Ankara, Kök yay., 2005), p. 13. For information about the Hunchak Committee’s program, please see: Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, pp. 130-131; Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, pp. 432,437-438. Also, to see the full text and parts regarding terror, please see: Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi*, 1. Cilt (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yay., 1998), pp. 9-12, 178-183. To make a comparison, please see: Ahmet Halaçoğlu, *1895 Trabzon Olayları ve Ermenilerin Yargılanması* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2005), pp. 29-34.

Armenian state in eastern Anatolia and combining it with Armenian states in Russian and Iranian territories.¹⁵

The road map to reach these objectives was: spreading propaganda, creating tensions, engaging in terrorism, setting up organizational structures and engaging in labor unrest.¹⁶ One of the main attention-grabbing characteristics of the committee was that its target was not only the government, but also Turks and Armenians working for the government.¹⁷

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Hunchak Committee, which gave the appearance of being both communist and nationalist, started to publish in London a newspaper titled “Hınçak” in Armenian in order to spread out its ideas and to increase its number of supporters.¹⁸ In Ottoman territories, this committee organized itself first İstanbul, and then in Anatolia: in the cities of Amasya, Arapkir, Bafra, Eğin, Merzifon, Tokat, and Yozgat.¹⁹ Actually, these were not the only locations in Anatolia in which the Hunchak Committee organized itself. It had organized itself in cities in the south such as Antep, Maraş, and Adana, and

succeeded in finding support especially amongst the youngsters. For instance, in 1895, at the head of committees’ branch in Maraş was a person named Ter Kovanet.²⁰ After the committee completed building up its organizational capacity, it started carry out various activities in İstanbul and Anatolia, such as the Kumkapı Demonstration, Sason Insurrection, and Zeytun Insurrection.

15 Süslü ve diğerleri, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, p. 171.

16 Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni Sorunu (1914-1923)* (İstanbul: İz Yay., 1996), p. 115; İltar, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist Ermenilerin...*, p. 13.

17 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p. 131.

18 Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, p. 441.

19 Göyünç, *Türkler ve Ermeniler*, p. 99.

20 BOA, Y.PRK. ASK. 132/45 (1315 R 20 /17 September 1897). For detailed information regarding Ter Kovanet’s activities in Marash, please see: Ahmet Halaçoğlu, *Bir Ermeni’nin İtirafı 1895 - Maraş Ermeni Olayları* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yay., 2007).

Dashnaktsutyun Committee

In 1890 in Tbilisi, non-socialist, nationalist Armenians who the Hunchaks could not satisfy established a union called “Droshak” (“Flag”) and published a newspaper with the same name.²¹ Afterwards, Droshak took the name “Dashnaktsutyun” (“Armenian Revolutionary Federation”) by merging with Russian and Georgian unions which had been established against Tsarist Russia.²² The objectives of this committee was to; 1) assemble the committees “Genç Ermenistan” (“Young Armenia”) in Tbilisi, and “Armenekan” and “Hinçak “ in Van, 2) insert Armenian gangs into Ottoman territories, 3) arm Armenians in these territories, 4) teach villagers how to use guns, 5) establish gangs, 6) train gang leaders, 7) establish a defense organization, and 8) carry out a revolution by gathering supporters and secure the independence of Armenia. The committee’s slogan was; “No matter their circumstance, kill Turks and Kurds wherever you see them. Kill reactionaries, promise breakers, and Armenian inspectors [*hafiyeler*, who worked for the Ottoman government] and traitors. Take revenge!”²³

The Dashnaks, who referred themselves as social-democrat, socialist-revolutionary, nationalist, and humanist, actually emerged as a terrorist organization.²⁴ The committee’s program was centered on spurring revolts by establishing revolutionary groups, imitating the example set forth by Russian nihilists.²⁵ The committee’s symbol was also correspondingly designed to reflect these objectives. The symbol contained a shovel, a pen, and a dagger. The shovel symbolized the workers, the pen symbolized the intellectuals, and the dagger symbolized the fighters and *fedaîs* (someone who is ready to face any type danger for the sake of a higher cause).²⁶

Just like the Hunchaks, the Dashnaks, determined to try all methods for reaching their objectives, planned to stir revolts by attacking not only Turks but also Armenians who were not members of their group. This would thus guarantee external powers intervening in these events, and Armenian

21 İlder, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist Ermenilerin...*, p. 14.

22 Göyünç, *Türkler ve Ermeniler*, p. 100; Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p. 132.

23 Süslü ve diğerleri, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, p. 172.

24 İlder, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist Ermenilerin...*, p. 15.

25 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, s.133. For the full text of the program published by Dashnaktsutyun Committee with the title “Armenian Revolutionary Union Program”, please see: Halaçoğlu, *1895 Trabzon Olayları...*, pp. 37–40. To compare some of the small differences that is thought to be a result of translation from Armenian, please see: Paşa, *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi*, pp. 183–187.

26 İlder, *Türkiye’de Sosyalist Ermenilerin...*, p. 15, footnote 14.

nationalist would hereby establish an independent state.²⁷ Anyone who did not follow the orders of the Dashnaks were declared traitors and were punished by them. For instance, a wealthy Armenian named I. Jamharian was stabbed to death for not paying 30,000 rubles. Dashnaktsutyun members were merciless even towards the members of their own ethnic group. The priest of the Ahtamar Church (Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar) A. Vartabet and his helper Mihran, and also notable persons of Armenian society like D. Davit, G. Manoug, B. Capamajian, B. Atamian, S. Keyfijan, M. Aghazarian, and H. Arakelian were all killed by the Dashnaks for opposing their arbitrary actions. For the same reason, Baliozian from İzmir and Gerektzian from Erzurum were also killed by Armenian militants.²⁸

There were two reasons why Armenian nationalists choose terror as a method for achieving their objectives. The first reason was to achieve a demographic majority in the regions where they sought to establish an independent state, by slaughtering the regions' majority constituted by Muslim Turks or forcing them to migrate. The second reason was to portray the events thus occurring as a "massacre of Armenians" to the Western world in order to attain their military and political intervention.²⁹

ARMENIAN COMMITTEES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES AFTER PROCLAMATION OF THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

Before the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era (*II. Meşrutiyet*), Armenian committees such as the Hunchak Committee, Dashnaktsutyun, and "Ramgavar" were accepted as terrorist organizations by the Ottoman Empire. The reason for this was that these committees had secessionist ideas and that they chose propaganda and terror as ways for reaching their goals. Armenian historians claim that these committees were unable to unite due to differences of opinion on many issues between them. Even though this claim is partially true, the main objective of the committees was the creation of Armenian secessionist movements. From the point of view of the Ottoman Empire, what was important was not their internal conflicts, but the fact that they possessed secessionist objectives. Therefore, what has been scrutinized the most by Turkish historiography is the fact that decisions for independence or autonomy were taken by Armenians, rather than by which Armenian committees they

27 Stanford J. Shaw ve Ezel Kural Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, çev. Mehmet Harmancı, 2. Baskı, II. Cilt (İstanbul: e Yay., 1983), p. 253.

28 Türkkaya Ataöv, "İki Olağanüstü Ermeni Kaynağı-Papazian ve Katchaznoui", *Tarih Boyunca Türklerin Ermeni Toplumu İle İlişkileri Sempozyumu* (Ankara, 1985), p. 294.

29 Yusuf Sarıncay, "Ermeni Tehciri ve Yargılamalar", *Türk-Ermeni İlişkilerinin Gelişimi ve 1915 Olayları Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildirileri* içinde, haz. Hale Şıvgın (Ankara, 2006), p. 258.

were taken by, and there has not been much of an interest in the internal structures of these committees. In this respect, the lack of knowledge about the details of activities of Armenian communities are a shortfall of Turkish historiography, and this shortfall must be remedied.

Following the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era, Armenian political parties/committees and leading Armenian public figures were in an effort to have good relations with the Ottoman government. However, at the same time, they secretly established armed gangs in villages. Detailed information regarding the establishment and features of these gangs can be obtained particularly from the circulars of Dashnaksutyun concerning villages.³⁰ Ottoman officials were aware of the fact that Armenians in the southern regions were attempting, with various activities, to revive the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia even after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era. However, this must not be understood as having been a new objective. In fact, in 1891, a short time after their establishment in 1887, the Hunchak Committee had organized itself in Adana and its surroundings, and procured the mediation of the Great Powers by instigating an insurrection in Zeytun and managed to have the Ottoman government accept some of its requests.³¹

In 1908, during which the Constitutional Era was proclaimed, a large number of Armenians -foremost being Karekin Pastırmacıyan (Armen Garo)- who were identified by the Ottoman government as being committee members and thus who fled abroad, started returning back to the country.³² This was because, after proclamation of the Constitutional Era, the Hunchak and Dasnaksutyun committees, which were previously accepted as terrorist organizations, now became political parties.³³ These political parties opened clubs in many regions

30 H. Erdoğan Cengiz (haz.), *Ermeni Komitelerinin Â'mâl ve Hareketi İhtilâliyesi* (Ankara, 1983), pp. 176-180.

31 Regarding the members, operations and establishment of the Hunchak Committee in Adana and its surroundings, please see: Nejlâ Günay, *Maraş'ta Ermeniler ve Zeytun İsyanları* (İstanbul: IQ Yay., 2007), pp. 263-279. For the insurrections carried out by committee in this region, please see: *Ibid.*, pp. 287-321.

32 Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Atase ve Denetleme Başkanlığı Yayınları, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914-1918*, Cilt IV (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2006), pp. 3, 5, 7. Recep Karacakaya ve diğerleri, "İstanbul Ermeni Patriği Mateos İzmirlıyan ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri", *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, 1. Cilt (Ankara: ASAM, 2003), p. 390; Yalçın Özalp, *Millet-i Sadıka Patırtısı ve Maraş*, yay. Yılmaz Akçakale (İstanbul: t.y.) p. 226.

33 The committees asked if they could open branches in various regions in Anatolia, and the in turn, the local authorities asked to the central government for instructions on whether these committees -who were accepted as a terrorist organization until that day- could open such branches. It was declared to local authorities that there was no harm in the Dashnak and Hunchak committees opening new branches in rural areas on the grounds that these communities were allowed to open branches in İstanbul. For a copious amount of correspondence (45 leafs) with respect to this issue, please see: BOA. Dahiliye Nezareti Siyasi Kısım Evrakı (DH. SYS.), 65/2.

of Anatolia and gathered the Armenian society in these clubs, which increased the suspicion and uneasiness of the Muslim population.³⁴ During that period, the government lifted all arms trade and import restrictions, just like it lifted restrictions on everything else.³⁵ This formed the basis for the quick armament of Armenians. Benefiting from the far-reaching level of freedom given to them by the government of the Constitutional Era, Armenians could easily bring guns and ammunition to the country with the purposes of first “*protecting themselves*” and later on “*pursuing the attainment of their claims in an aggressive way*”.³⁶ The Great Powers had provoked Armenians into attempting to establish an Armenian state in Çukurova, which had strategic importance due to the Mediterranean and Baghdad railways. On the other hand, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Cretan movements and internal insurrections were accepted as an opportunity by the Armenian committees. According to plans made by them, Armenians were to revolt and resist against the government. Upon this, European states would send their armored vehicles to Mersin and give Kilikya to Armenians.³⁷ Even more, the establishment of “*Great Armenia*” would be approved by the European states.³⁸

The committees made Armenians migrate from eastern cities to Adana to attain their goals, without having these people registered. Armenians coming from abroad to Adana were dispatched to and settled in villages.³⁹ Armenians, who were brought from Maraş, Harput and Diyarbakır and made to look like

34 Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde 1909 Adana Olayları*, Cilt II (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010), p. 13.

35 Metin Martı (haz.), *Cemal Paşa, Hatırat*, 5. Baskı (İstanbul: Arma Yay., 1996), p.359. There are some differences between the different publications of “Hatırat” of Cemal Paşa. For other parts in which Armenian events in Adana are narrated, please see: Behçet Kemal (tamamlayan), *Cemal Paşa, Hatıralar* (Selek Yay., M. Sıralar Matbaası, 1959), pp. 348-355; Ahmet Zeki İzgöer (haz.), *Cemal Paşa, Hatırat (1913-1922)*, Hatıralarla Yakın Tarih Dizisi (İstanbul: Nehir Yay., 2006), pp. 348-357. Regarding how easy and ordinary it was to acquire guns, please see: Vahakn N. Dadrian, *İttifak Devletleri Kaynaklarında Ermeni Soykırımı*, çev. Ali Çakıroğlu (İstanbul: Belge Yay., 2007), p. 215.

36 Salâhi R. Sonyel, “İngiliz Gizli Belgelerine Göre Adana’da Vuku Bulan Türk-Ermeni Olayları (Temmuz 1908- Aralık 1909)”, *Bellekten*, C.LI, S.201 (Ankara: TTK Yay., Aralık 1987), p. 1267.

37 Ahmet Rüstem Bey, *La Guerre Mondiale et La Question Turco-Arménienne*, çev. Cengiz Aydın (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2001), p. 41; Alpay Kabacalı (haz.), *Talât Paşa’nın Anıları* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Yay., 2003), p. 24; Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, p. 551; İzgöer, *Cemal Paşa, Hatırat*, p. 353; Süleyman Kâni İrtem, *Ermeni Meselesinin İçyüzü*, haz. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu (İstanbul: Temel Yay., 2004), p. 150. Regarding arrival of warships of Britain, France, Italy, Austria, Russia, Germany, and United States to the Mersin Harbor, please see: Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Ermeni Soykırım Tarihi – Balkanlar’dan Anadolu ve Kafkasya’ya Etnik Çatışma*, çev. Ali Çakıroğlu (İstanbul: Belge Yay., 2008), p. 271.

38 Arsen Avagyan ve Gaidz F. Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat Terakki İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya*, çev. Mutlucan Şahan (İstanbul: Aras Yay., 2005), pp. 16-17.

39 Regarding testimonies of a 20-person Armenian group, who escaped after their existence was reported to security units, in which they confessed that they came from United States and they were from Harput, please see: BOA. Yıldız Pera-kende Zaptiye Nezareti Evrakı, 38/36, (1326 Ra 19).

seasonal workers, were being placed in empty plots seized by Armenians or in the houses of Armenians living in towns.⁴⁰ In the meantime, Armenians accelerated the propagation of their propagandas. In the various newspapers they were publishing, they released news that mentioned poor Armenians who were the victims of famine, for instance Zeytun Armenians, and the government's use of force and violence upon them in order to collect taxes. Realizing the forthcoming danger, the Ottoman government worked to convince people that these news were not true, and also had refutation texts published.⁴¹

The degree of freedom afforded by the Constitutional Era government, the weakness of the administration, and the geographical location were factors that made it easier to import guns to Anatolia. As a consequence of these, armories were built in Anatolia by Armenian committees to easily procure guns to their supporters. Adana and Maraş were important gun distribution centers as well.⁴²

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One other reason for the tension between Turks and Armenians in the region was the dissatisfaction of Armenians upon the settling of Muslims coming from Balkans to this region, and the efforts of Armenians, who dwelled in Haçin (known today as the township [*kaza*] of Saimbeyli, located within the borders of Adana) to come to Çukurova.⁴³

Having completed their preparations, Armenians were simply becoming anxious to start an insurrection and were thus purposefully provoking the

40 Mehmed Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olayları ve Anıları*, çev. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1982), p. 24.

41 Takvim-i Vekayi, I.se., ad.151, Pazartesi, 2 Mart 1325 (15 Mart 1909)'dan Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, "Takvim-i Vekayi'de Ermenilerle İlgili Haberler", *Bellekten*, C.LV, S.212-214 (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1991), p. 835.

42 Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Siverek, Trabzon, Samsun, Antep, Bursa, İzmit, Adapazarı, and İstanbul were being used as the other gun distribution centers. Please see: İlater, *Türkiye'de Sosyalist Ermenilerin...*, pp. 39–40. Regarding the armament of the Muslim population in Maraş and the increase in Armenian communities' operations, which will help the reader in understanding that armament was taking place throughout the region, please see: Artem Ohandjanian, *Österreich-Armenien Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Akten-stücke 1877–1936* (Wien, 1995), no. 662; İnanç Atılğan ve Kerstin Tomenendal (haz.), *HA PA XII 198 no. 15/E Cilt IV, p. 3340'dan Avusturya-Macaristan ve Ermeni Meselesi*, Cilt. IV (Viyana, 2004).

43 Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Le Génocide des Arméniens* (Paris : Odile Jacob, 2006), pp. 107–108.

Muslims.⁴⁴ The Muslim population was becoming concerned because of Armenians issuing cigarette packages that had the symbol of Armenia engraved on them and cigarette paper that had Armenian written on it.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the opening of a “Milli Lokal” (“National Club”) in Adana by the Hunchaks after the Dashnaktsutyun –who were known to have secessionist intentions- had already opened one, in which conferences were held about the longing for an independent Armenia, was increasing the hostility of Armenians towards Muslims.⁴⁶ The fact that some Armenians, who were members of committees, such as Gökdereliyan Garabet, were putting target practice signs in their houses and having young Armenians do practice shooting increased inter-group tensions to the peak.⁴⁷

These preparations made by Armenians was not escaping the attention of Muslims, and this was fueling hate and grudge between the two sides. An armament race started between Armenians and Muslims due to the day-by-day increase in negative emotions between the two sides and the insufficient efforts of the local administration in finding a solution to this problem. Armenian newspapers were fecklessly writing about the necessity of armament, claiming that it was crucial in protecting and defending the constitutional order, and their physical well-being, honor, and properties. Interpreting Armenian armament as a sign for an impending attack against Muslims, Muslims were warning their coreligionists to be prepared. Moreover, both two sides were not refraining from trying out the guns they were buying in empty yards, in the vicinity of the city, and even in the city center.⁴⁸

The proclamation of the Constitutional Era not only did not remove Armenian committees with secessionist ideas, but facilitated these secret organizations coming out into the public and thus caused them to gain legitimacy. A French diplomatic letter sent from Maraş to Kilikya on 4 January 1909, spoke of pressure being put on prominent Christians by the Committee of Union and

44 German and British documents’ clear demonstration of Armenians’ provocative demeanor prevents Armenian authors from dismissing this fact. Referring to Armenians, Doughty Wyllie, the British Vice Consul in Adana stated: “A vicious and provocative language, used very widely and directed at the Turks. The commotion created by and the incurable babbling of the armed Armenian has provoked the Turk...” Britanya Hariciye Arşivi, FO, 24/220, Genel Rapor s.70, ek no.48’den; Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Ermeni Soykırımında Kurumsal Roller - Toplu Makaleler*, Kitap 1, çev. Atilla Tuygan (İstanbul: Belge Yay., 2004), p. 6.

45 Bayram Kodaman ve Mehmet Ali Ünal (haz.), *Son Vak’anivis Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi Tarihi II. Meşrutiyet Olayları (1908–1909)* (Ankara: TTK Yay., 1996), p. 71.

46 Cemal Anadol, *Tarih Boyunca Türk-Ermeni Meselesi - Ermeni Dosyası* (İstanbul: Bilge Karınca, 2007), p. 284.

47 Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde 1909...*, p. 16.

48 İrtem, *Ermeni Meselesinin İcyüzü*, pp.158–160; Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde 1909...*, p. 75.

Progress (CUP) members (who the letter claimed were in an effort to solidify the position of their new regime) along with their neighborhood leaders, and of the danger of war.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Armenians were the most ardent supporters of the Constitutional Era, and the long lasting celebrations they held for the proclamation of the Constitutional Era significantly escalated the tension in Adana.⁵⁰ The local unit of CUP became aware of this situation and felt the need to take precautions. In order to ease the anxiety of prominent Christians, who were fearful of the pressure from the partisans of the old regime and influential tribal leaders in Çukurova, the local unit of CUP had the military governor (*askerî vali*) of the region and Governor (*Vali*) of Adana Bahri Bey removed from duty. However, these precautions could not prevent the outbreak of the events. The events that broke out between Muslims and Armenians, which started on 14 April 1909 and lasted until the middle of May, spilled over to nearby cities. There were casualties, injuries, and people forced to leave their homes from both sides.

The proclamation of the Constitutional Era not only did not remove Armenian committees with secessionist ideas, but facilitated these secret organizations coming out into the public and thus caused them to gain legitimacy.

Dasnaktsutyun and Hunchak committees, which did not learn from the sufferings in the Adana events, swung into action again to arm Armenians. The importance of all Armenians being armed was stressed in letters of instructions sent to all units of the committees.⁵¹ This is an indication that Armenians adopted armed insurgency as a method of establishing an independent state. This armed organization capacity building caused Dasnaktsutyun, which was also operating in the political sphere, to emerge as a threat to the Ottoman Empire that was going through difficult times in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars. Facilitating the intervention of the Great Powers by bringing the issue of reform to the agenda, Armenians were able to attain what they wanted through this Great Power support. The Ottoman government took various precautions regarding such activities by Armenians due to several reasons. One reason was that, with the start of the World War I, these Armenian groups cooperated with the Russian army, and opened new fronts against the Ottoman Empire within its borders in Bitlis and Muş. Another reason was that they ambushed Ottoman

49 Kévorkian, *Le Génocide des Arméniens*, p. 101.

50 Dadrian, *Ermeni Soykırım Tarihi...*, p. 270.

51 Ohandjanian, *Österreich-Armenien Faksimilesammlung...*, no.715; Atılğan, *HA PA XII 201 no.133/G, cilt V, p. 3573–3576'dan Avusturya-Macaristan ve Ermeni Meselesi*, Cilt IV; Seyit Sertçelik, *Rus ve Ermeni Kaynaklarının Işığında Ermeni Sorununun Ortaya Çıkış Süreci* (Ankara: TBMM Yay., 2009), p. 215.

soldiers. A third reason was that they attacked defenseless villages, which lacked most of their men as they had gone off to fight in the war, and killed many people. The most important precautions were the arresting of committee leaders and the relocation of Armenians away from warfronts.

ARMENIAN TERRORISM IN MARAŞ AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Armenians organized into small groups upon Ottoman government's policy to disband Armenian committees and decision to relocate Armenians. Alongside perpetrating robberies and murders, these Armenians armed their cognates located in Halep (Aleppo), and registered them to their armed committee. The committee was established in Halep with the purpose of merging with enemy armies and attacking Ottoman borderlines.

9 bandits of a 25 member group affiliated with this committee were arrested in Maraş. Based on the testimony given by those who were arrested, it was identified that the Armenian Deputy of Halep (*Halep Ermeni Murahhasası*) Nerses Vartabet, pharmacist Nerses Efendi who dwelt in the Kazgancı Bazaar, Diyarbekrî İsa, Nişan, Muşeg Dikran, merchant Dikran Müfdikyan who dwelt in the Kıl Inn, Agop from Diyarbakır, village headman Ohannes from Sason, and baker Haço from the Şeyh Neighborhood were the high-ranking administrators of the committee, and were the ones who acquired guns and ammunition for the organization. It was also found out that the head of the committee was İsa from Silvan, and that Deputy Nerses Efendi was also head of the revolutionary coterie. According to the testimony, Nerses Efendi would from time to time have a force go up the Kurd Mountains (Halep Mountain) and have them deployed there, and was planning later on to go to the mountain to burn down any neighborhood that the group would encounter.⁵² Moreover, it was revealed that the main targets of the committee were Kilis and Antep, and that if they found the chance, they would attack these cities.⁵³

Notifying that bombs and dynamites were found in some houses during house searches in Maraş⁵⁴ and that Armenians who were relocated to Halep started organizing gangs, Minister of Internal Affairs Talat Paşa ordered governorates (*valilik*) in Halep and Adana, and sub-governorates (*mutasarrıflık*) in Urfa,

52 Regarding the report sent by the Police Sergeant of Maraş to the *Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti* (the Directorate of Public Safety), please see: BOA. DH. EUM. 2.Şb., 21/7. Ayrıca bkz. BOA. DH.ŞFR., 63/194 (21 Nisan 1332), BOA. DH. ŞFR., 576/68 (1334 Ks 24).

53 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 668/60 /1334 Ke 05).

54 Nejla Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş (Ermeniler, Türkler, Müslümanlar)* (Kahramanmaraş: Ukde, 2012), p. 80.

Maraş, and Zor to be watchful on the grounds of it being heard that a 24-member gang –formed in Kilis- had started to move towards the environs of Diyarbakır.⁵⁵ In addition, the government tasked Esat Bey, the Deputy Director of the Public Security Directorate (*Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdür Muavini*), with investigating and inspecting Armenian gangs' activities in Maraş.⁵⁶ Esat Bey's knowledge of Armenian language and having previously looked into Armenian-related happenings was the cause of his assignment.⁵⁷ In a report that he sent to his Minister of Foreign Affairs Burian, Consul of Halep of the Australia-Hungary Empire stated that Armenians had established a gang, and were aiming to conduct raids to the embassies of Austria-Hungary and Germany by wearing Ottoman military uniforms in order to disrupt public order and security in the Ottoman Empire, and that the government –which got news of this- arrested 70 members of committee member Armenians in Halep.⁵⁸

The report prepared by the Maraş Sub-Governorate in 29 November 1915, and sent to the relevant authorities in the capital, contained the number of people that Armenians injured and killed in different villages, and the scale of the damage they inflicted on these people's properties. According to the report, 12 Muslims were killed and two Muslims were wounded in the center of Maraş. The houses of 4 Muslims were burnt down. A total of 27 Muslims were killed: 1 in Fatmalı Village, 3 in Hartlap Village, 4 in Öksekk Village, 3 in Afşarlı Village, 1 in Kumperli Village, 1 in Musalar Nomad Tent (*oba*), and 2 in Hacı Köseleler Farm, while 16 people were wounded. 51 houses were burnt down and 33 people's belongings were extorted.⁵⁹

During the start of the year 1916, while the relocation of Armenian people was underway, it was identified that another Armenian gang was operating in Zeytun.⁶⁰ In fact, İsmail, Ahmet who was the son of Mehmet Mustafa, and another friend of İsmail -who had all deserted the 12th Division (*12. Fırka*)- were on 14 August 1916 attacked by a 10-member bandit group as they were walking in a forestland two hours away from the Süleymanlı Township. After extorting the aforementioned soldiers' money and belongings, the bandits tied them together from their necks to suffocate them, and then escaped from the area. However, the aforementioned soldiers did not die, and after regaining

55 BOA. DH.ŞFR., 63/175 (20 Nisan 1332).

56 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 63/263 (27 Nisan 1332).

57 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 63/282 (28 Nisan 1332).

58 Ohandjanian, *Österreich-Armenien Faksimilesammlung...*, no.1186; Atılğan, *HA PA XXXVIII 369. no.5/P, cilt VII, p. 5153'den Avusturya Macaristan ve Ermeni*, Cilt VII.

59 BOA. DH.EUM.2.Şb., 14/48.

60 BOA. DH.ŞFR., 62/57 (6 Mart 1332).

consciousness, they reported what happened to them to the Süleymanlı District Governorate (*Kaymakamlık*). Sub-Governor of Maraş Kemal Bey assigned Gendarmerie Commander of Süleymanlı (*Süleymanlı Jandarma Komutanı*) to track down the bandits. 7 bandits were caught in the operations. Based on the testimony of the captured bandits, it was understood that many Armenians - who had deserted their military duties from various places- were grouping themselves in the Süleymanlı Mountains. Kemal Bey thereupon notified the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the importance of not a giving a chance to the Armenian deserters to harm the neighborhood's public order, by relocating the people of Zeytun region far away from their neighborhoods or preventing bandits from escaping.⁶¹ On 10 February 1916, another Armenian gang was captured with criminal evidence in a cave in the Efkere borough (*nahiyesi*) of Kayseri.⁶²

There were many Armenians in the Amanos Mountains range who had escaped from the relocation or who had deserted their military duty. These people were attacking soldiers who were being sent to their hometowns for a rest, seizing their documents authorizing them to take a rest (*tebdil-i heva*), and harassing people passing through that region.⁶³ Operations were conducted on 4 October 1916 by Adana Regional Command (*Adana Mintika Kumandanlığı*) upon the increase in harassments, which resulted in the arrests of 35 military deserters and 2 Armenians. 1 Armenian and 2 military deserters stated that they could show the location of where the remaining bandits were hiding. All of the arrested ones were dispatched to the Martial Court (*Divan-ı Harb*).⁶⁴

Upon Armenian gangs -operating in the environs of Niğde- going over to Adana in order to damage railway lines, respective administrative units were warned to prevent such attempts and were requested to take necessary precautions.⁶⁵ Upon this, a 45-member force was dispatched to the area and the Kızıldağ Kayışlı Borough was surrounded in case the bandits pulled back. A 28-member force was also dispatched to Pozantı. It was identified that Topal Agop, who had been dismissed from Beyoğlu Police Department (*Beyoğlu Komiserliği*), was the head of the bandit group.⁶⁶ The government, which was waging a serious struggle against the bandits in Maraş, requested from the Niğde Sub-Governorate to investigate whether this 28-member bandit group

61 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Şb., 26/40.

62 Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, p.355.

63 ATASE, BDH, K1.4214, Dos.195-57, Fh.1. Krş; Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş...*, p. 82.

64 ATASE, BDH, K1.4214, Dos. 195-57, Fh.1-8.

65 ATASE, BDH, K1.4218, Dos. 193-67, Fh.1-6.

66 ATASE, BDH, K1.4218, Dos. 193-67, Fh.1-2.

came from eastern provinces or Maraş, and to not lose a track of them.⁶⁷ The government also recommended that Niğde Sub-Governorate should cooperate with nearby provinces (*iller*) if necessary.⁶⁸

The fact that some Muslims too were engaging in banditry in southern regions -on top of Armenian bandits- brought about a demand for a serious number of forces to secure public order. According to a report prepared by Halep Chief Civil Inspector (*Halep Mülkiye Müfettişi*) Şekip Bey on 15 September 1915 regarding Maraş Shire's (*Liva*) order and discipline, there were three different 25-30-member bandit groups -one of them Kurdish and two of them Armenian-operating in Maraş alone. There was a Kurdish gang, established in Elbistan, the number of members of which was increasing day by day, and this gang was acquiring provisions and new members from Kurdish villages. The Çolakyan Gang, which had 25 members, was operating around Zeytun. The gang's most attention-grabbing activity was its choking to death of two immigrants on the Zeytun-Elbistan route. The gang known as Topal Gâvur or Topal Agop had 30 members, and was roaming between İslahiye and Pazarcık. Attacking the Ördekler Village in Pazarcık in June 1917, the Topal Agop gang killed the village's imam and extorted 3000 liras from villagers. After this event, the majority of forces that had been allocated to track down bandits were sent after the Topal Agop gang. Since this would cause a security gap in Maraş, the Maraş Sub-Governorate requested for reinforcement from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁶⁹ The Minister of Internal Affairs Talat Bey stated that forces were requested from Syria and Western Arabia Public Command (*Suriye ve Garbi Arabistan Umum Kumandanlığı*) and 7th Army Command Authority (*7. Ordu Kumandanlığı Vekâleti*), and ordered developments be monitored and reported.⁷⁰ Topal Agop and his cousin Mardiros, who had killed many gendarme and regular army soldiers and who were operating in the environs of Maraş and İslahiye for 10 months, were killed in a clash in the vicinity of Hasan Bey as a result of the persistent tracking of the government. During the clash, Sergeant Süleyman and five soldiers accompanying him were wounded and 1 person of the local folk died. The government decided to pay a total of 150 liras to ones wounded during clash and to appropriate 5000 kuruş in funds for the family of the person who lost his life.⁷¹

The Commander of 4th Army (*Dördüncü Ordu Komutanı*) Ahmet Celal Paşa

67 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 81-112, (12 Teşrinisani 1333).

68 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 81-188, (21 Teşrinisani 1333).

69 BOA. DH. EUM. 6.şb., 27/25, (8 Kanunuevvel 1333).

70 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 81/81 (8 Teşrinisani 1333).

71 BOA. DH. EUM. 6.şb., 28/9 (1336 Ra 8).

gave orders to the Commander of the 44th Division (*44. Fırka Komutanı*) and the commanders of the officers (*zabit kumandanları*) near the Armenian gangs in İslahiye to track these gangs. They were to establish two units of 40 persons each, track the Armenian gangs, and with the help of gendarme forces, immediately apprehend them.⁷² On the other hand, according to the report prepared by Lieutenant (*Mülazım-ı Evvel*) Kemal Efendi, who had been sent to İslahiye as the commander of the two units; although they was not an armed bandit gang, there were Armenian construction workers who were taking out the guns they were hiding during day-time to engage in banditry during night-time. In fact, according to the report, the local community was aware of this activity, and that all of these individuals had documents signed by Construction Inspector (*İnşaat Müfettişi*) Fuat Ziya Bey showing that they were construction workers. It was as such not possible to arrest these individuals, but the report notified that putting them under heavy surveillance would prevent them from engaging in banditry.⁷³

In a telegram sent on 10 February 1917 by the Regiment Commander of Adana (*Adana Jan-darma Alay Komutanı*) personally working towards capturing the gang in İslahiye, it was reported that the captured gang members were previously relocated Armenians, and that the Cebel-i Bereket Sub-Governorate would continue its tracking in order to apprehend those procuring weapons for the returning relocated Armenians and the rest of the gang.⁷⁴ Concerning the rest of the gang, the telegram stated that the authorities engaged in a clash with a 32-member gang in the environs of İslahiye's Şihli Village on 1 February 1917, that there were four deaths and one injured among the soldiers, and that the Armenian bandits benefited from the steepness of the terrain to escape. On 5 February 1917, another clash took place, in which two bandits were killed and one was captured alive in an injured state, but that three soldiers died and that the remaining bandits escaped towards Antep. The telegram stated that in order to disallow conspirators to desert their duties and in order to form a new operation against bandits, it was needed to send a force under the command of the battalion (*tabur*) present in İslahiye.⁷⁵ Someone by the name Manok from Sivas, who infiltrated from Halep on 8 March 1917 and headed towards the mountains that were the borders of İslahiye and Bahçe townships to Maraş, gathered together 60 bandits wearing gendarme outfits and attacked the nearby villages, killing some of the villagers and injuring some others.⁷⁶ Moreover,

72 ATASE, BDH, Kl.4214, Dos. 195-57, Fh.2.

73 ATASE, BDH, Kl.4214, Dos. 195-57, Fh.2-5.

74 ATASE, BDH, Kl. 4223, Dos.81-84, Fh.1.

75 Hikmet Özdemir (ed.), *Türk- Ermeni İhtilafı - Makaleler* (Ankara: TBMM Yay., 2007), p. 194.

76 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 74/72 (15 Mart 1333).

the Manok Gang attacked the gendarmes who were going to their units in the environs of Ekbez Lake, killing and injuring some of them.⁷⁷

The Ottoman government wanted to take new precautions in region upon an increase in gang activities that was concentrating on Kilis. The precautionary measures were increased around the 15 Muslim villages in the Kürtdağı region which were attacked the most.⁷⁸ No matter how closely they were tracked, the actions of Armenian gangs in the Anatolia-Syria border could not be stopped. According to what the Governor of Adana reported to the 12th Corps Command (*12. Kolordu Komutanlığı*) on 3 November 1917: 1) a 20-member Armenian gang had crossed into Adana to attack railways, tunnels, and other places, 2) Two or three days ago a 32 armed people had raided İşçi Bekir Town in Kamışlı, 3) One day ago 15 armed people were seen roaming the forestland of Pozantı, 4) Efforts to such activities were not successful because gendarme force necessary to apprehend these bandits could not be acquired.⁷⁹ Ten days later, the same gang raided the Kamışlı Borough and burned down some houses.⁸⁰

Armenian gangs were fulfilling their provision needs by raiding Muslim villages. Following its establishment in Maraş, an Armenian gang operating in Maraş and its environs attacked the Yanık Village in İslâhiye in June 1918 with a 70-member group, extorting provisions and animals. They then succeeded to escape and units were established with gendarme and soldiers to track down the bandits.⁸¹ On 22 June 1918, an Armenian gang of 40 members ambushed and killed 7 gendarmes in nearby the villages of Hacılar and ..?.., which were 9 hours away from İslâhiye. The next day, they killed six people, 4 being of the locals and 2 gendarmes, in the area of Sabunsuyu.⁸² In the beginning of July, a corporal and two privates, who were ordered to track down a military deserter from the 44th Division's district (*44. Tümen mıntıkası*), were killed by Armenian gangs in a marshy place between Zincirli and Süleymanağa Villages in the region called İntelli near İslâhiye. The fact that this incident took place in a mountainous region close to a railroad and the sudden disappearance of the bandits brought to mind the possibility that it was the railroad workers and servants who had formed the gang. It was therefore decided that a platoon (*müfrezin*) to be formed by the 12th Army Corps (*12. Kolordu*), working

77 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 74/141 (8 Mart 1333).

78 BOA. DH. ŞFR., 573/112 (1333 Ke 15).

79 ATASE, BDH, K1.4218, Dos. 193-67, Fh.1.

80 ATASE, BDH, K1.4218, Dos. 193-67, Fh.1-14.

81 BOA. DH. EUM. 2.Şb., 55/24 (25 Haziran 1334).

82 ATASE, BDH, K1.2688, Dos.130-247, Fh.2, 2-1.

together with the Adana gendarme platoon, would fully scan the Cebel-i Bereket Sub-Governorate region that was near the İslâhiye-Osmaniye railroad, and apprehend and punish the criminals.⁸³

Reinforcements were sent to the region to apprehend the bandits on 6 August 1918.⁸⁴ When they could not be captured, two battalions (*tabur*) from the 10th Depot Regiment Command (*10. Depo Alay Komutanlığı*) were ordered on 12 August 1918 to apprehend the Armenian gangs.⁸⁵

Armenian Terror Activities after the Armistice of Mudros

After Ottoman Empire's losing of the First World War and its signing of the Armistice of Mudros, Armenian gangs operating in the south tended to move towards carrying out bolder operations. Gang members coming down from the mountains rallied in Halep and branched into three arms, and decided to march to Adana by passing through Maraş, Antep, and Kilis. The Ottoman government took measures to prevent this from happening.⁸⁶

Upon the coordinated actions of Armenian gangs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a set of instructions on 7 October 1918. According to this; platoons were established by exempting some members of the shire gendarme (*liva jandarma*) from other duties in order use them for as policemen (*inzibat*). Furthermore, Sub-Governor of Maraş Ata Bey notified the following orders to the Second Army Command (*İkinci Ordu Kumandanlığı*): 1) the strengthening of the soldier platoon due to their insufficiency in tracking down the gangs, 2) the need to do what was necessary to have soldiers and gendarme to act jointly.⁸⁷ The preparations for establishing gendarme forces to keep track of Armenian gangs started in response to Sub-Governor of Maraş's request.⁸⁸ Alongside the gendarme forces, two regular army platoons (*nizamiye müfrezesi*) of 30 people each were assigned to track down the Armenian gang in İslâhiye.⁸⁹

83 Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Atase ve Denetleme Başkanlığı Yayınları, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri 1914-1918*, Cilt II (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2005), p. 268.

84 ATASE, BDH, K1.2688, Dos.130-247, Fh.14.

85 ATASE, BDH, K1.2702, Dos.130A-303, Fh.001.

86 BOA, BEO, 4546/340934, 1339 Ra 10.

87 ATASE, BDH, K1.2702, Dos. 130A-303, Fh.009,01.

88 ATASE, BDH, K1.2702, Dos. 130A-303, Fh.009,02.

89 ATASE, BDH, K1.4214, Dos. 195-57, Fh.2-2.

The Ways Through Which Terror Groups Procured Their Needs

Armenians, who were previously exiled, were escaping from where they were and coming to Halep. They were there joining the organization that was formed with aim of establishing an independent state in the vicinity of Amanos Mountains, İslâhiye, Pazarcık, Kilis, Maraş, and Zeytun. They were intent on pursuing their activities until they achieved their goals and were thus attempting to inflict all manner of damages in the vicinity of Amanos Mountains, İslâhiye, Pazarcık, Kilis, Maraş, and Zeytun. It was ordered to the Halep Governorate to secretly and very carefully investigate the Halep Railroad Central Manager (*Halep Şimendifer Merkez Müdürü*) Mihnas, Basmacıyan dwelling in İstanbul, Paspasyan who again dwelt in İstanbul and was a cashier in a management company, Karamanyan from Maraş who was a telegraph operator in Halep Station, the other telegraph operator Balabanyan, and the merchant Tuma brothers, all of whom were being suspected of procuring all manner of materials to Armenian bandits who dwelt in the mountains.⁹⁰ Guns, ammunition, and provisions being procured in various ways by different people were being delivered to the abovementioned people, and were thus being delivered to İslâhiye and distributed by Alis Efendi in a completely unsupervised way. Furthermore, this delivery was taking place within the knowledge of the Railroad Head Manager (*Şimendifer Başmüdürü*) Şoven Donrer who was German Switzerland national.⁹¹ This was not the only way of procurement of weapons for Armenians. Gangs were stealing some of the guns and ammunition in Bahçe and Meydan-ı Ekber stations being sent to soldiers and sending them to İslâhiye via trains. This was easily being done with the help of machinist Hayik, machinist Vahan from Sivas, and stoker Arakil. The ammunition and guns sent underneath bread sacks were sometimes hid by Küpeli Anastas when they were taken to İslâhiye.

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90 ATASE, BDH, K1.2702, Dos.130A-303, Fh..3-4; relayed from: Günay, XX. *Yüzyılda Maraş...*, p. 86.

91 The support given by Armenians -who were working in the railroads and even in the Labor Battalions-to gangs had been determined many times. For an example of this in Geyve, please see: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, p. 385.

Another way of transporting the guns and ammunition was to deliver them to the Manager of Bahçe Station and the incarcerated former Manager of İslâhiye Station. İbik? (a stoker who worked in the İspalya roadway between Tahta Bridge and Aran, and who was the son of Tarakçioğlu from Hasanbey) and Balanyan from Kartal (who would determine the routes of the Balast and Şukka trains running between Ayranağa and İslâhiye) would send the weapons and ammunition they acquired to the abovementioned managers. Ceridyân, a telegraph operator in Yarbaş Station, was aware of these actions. Although they were first bandits, Foça (who first roamed around Meydan-ı Ekbez Station and then around Tahta Bridge, and who was the son of Marko from Hasanbey), and Agop (who was a blacksmith in Meydan-ı Ekbez Station and who was the son of Artin from Hasanbey) left their bandit group, got into jobs at the company, were assigned by their group to procure guns and ammunitions.

The authorities were also informed that Commander of İslâhiye (*İslâhiye Kumandanı*) was aware that guns acquired by bandits around Halep and Bahçe were being transported in various ways to İslâhiye. According to the intelligence gathered, the guns and ammunition were being hid in the store of İsmail Çavuş, who operated the store on behalf of the Station Commander (*İstasyon Kumandanı*). The guns and ammunition that was usually left at the İslâhiye Station were secretly taken away and sold for 5 golden liras to villages. The profit was shared between the sellers Sabit Alis (the old station manager), Rupen (a dispatch clerk at the station), Şükrü Osman (switchman), and Mehmet Ali Çavuş (who always accompanied Şükrü Osman).

It was understood that some of the Armenians who had previously been exiled due to the damages they caused in Amanos Mountains, İslâhiye, Pazarcık, Kilis, Maraş, and Zeytun had managed to escape. The aim of tracking down these gangs was to apprehend these runaway Armenians and thus disperse the gangs. Wanting to attain this goal, the Supreme Military Command (*Başkumandanlık*) ordered the apprehension of these aforementioned individuals and the carrying of necessary procedures.⁹² On the other hand, 44th Division Command (*44. Fırka Kumandanlığı*) ascertained that the ammunition that was dispatched to the bandits was acquired from the Germans by Papasyan, Basmacıyan and the Merkez Head Manager Şondermaher. It was decided to arrest these abovementioned persons along with some of those who helped them.⁹³ These persons were sent to Martial Court⁹⁴ and Captain Cemal Efendi was assigned to monitoring these trials.⁹⁵

92 ATASE, BDH, K1.2702, Dos. 130A–303, Fh.3–4, 5, 6, 7, 8; relayed from: Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş*, p. 87'den naklen.

93 ATASE, BDH, K1.2722, Dos. 133–51, Fh.003–37; relayed from: Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş*..., p. 87.

94 ATASE, BDH, K1.2688, Dos. 39–243, Fh.003–03; relayed from: Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş*..., p. 87.

95 ATASE, BDH, K1.2722, Dos. 133–51, Fh.003–40; relayed from: Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş*..., p. 87.

Beginning to experience provision shortages due to their facilitators being arrested, the bandits in the İslâhiye Çamlık forest moved onto other regions. It was determined that a bandit group of 40 people was attempting to gather provisions around Kilis and that another group whose member count could not be determined was roaming around the Hodi mountain. Upon this, it was ordered that measures be increased in Gâvur Mountain, Pazarcık, and Antep to prevent bandits from fleeing and getting into these regions.⁹⁶

In the struggle against Armenian gangs, the ones who were determined to be facilitating the bandits were either arrested or exiled out of the region. For example, the 44th Division Command (*44. Fırka Kumandanlığı*), tasked with following the bandits, saw it fit to exile 5 Armenians (who worked at the German school as teachers) and Molkan (who worked as a blacksmith at Haruniye) out of the region for helping the bandits.⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

Armenians under Ottoman Empire first organized themselves after the proclamations of the Edicts of Reorganization and Reform. It is seen that these precursor organizations, which took the appearance of charity foundations, were actually engaged in cultural activities aimed at awakening a national consciousness among Armenians.

Armenians established organizations with a political character after the 1880s. Although these committees being established with different names gave the appearance of being disorganized, they all had in common the objective of breaking loose from the Ottoman Empire. The fact that these committees chose terrorism and armed struggle to attain their goals brought them to a conflict with the state, which felt obliged to protect the well-being of its citizens. The interventions of foreign states made this domestic problem of the Ottoman state difficult to solve.

After the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era, the Ottoman Empire became faced with problems much more serious than before. The Ottoman administrators were forced on the one hand to deal with wars that broke out in Tripoli and the Balkans, and on the other hand to deal with demands of Armenian committees that would have taken the Ottoman Empire towards

96 ATASE, BDH, K1.2688, Dos. 39–243, Fh.003–13; relayed from: Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş...*, p. 87. Also see: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, p. 395.

97 ATASE, BDH, K1.2702, Dos. 130A–303, Fh. 011, 02; relayed from: Günay, *XX. Yüzyılda Maraş...*, p. 87.

disintegration. The outbreak of the First World War made the situation even worse. This was so because the states which the Ottoman Empire was fighting against were Britain and Russia, which were the states propping up Armenians' demands the most. In the end, when a certain section of Armenians helped Russia in the warfronts and the insurrections these Armenians carried out began to hurt the civilian population, the Ottoman state took action; Armenian committees were dispersed and Armenian people were relocated to regions behind warfronts.

Some Armenians did not give up on armed struggle and organized themselves in Halep. Infiltrating Anatolia, they carried out activities in Amanos. Although being at war made it more difficult, the Ottoman state did not back away from this struggle. The ones hurting the civilian population were persistently tracked down and dispersed.

Armenian terror groups' activities kept the Ottoman army occupied. On the other hand, the civilian population living in region became anxious. The acts of the terrorist organizations from time to time resulted in loss of lives and property, it was attempted to use this to give the impression that the state was in a state of weakness. However, this attempt met with failure when the state insisted on tracking down these terrorist organizations.

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